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Second country cooperation framework for Viet Nam (2001-2005)

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I. Development situation from a sustainable human development perspective

A. Development goals and priorities

1. In the past decade, Viet Nam has experienced significant changes in its social and economic conditions. The agent of change was the launch of the *doi moi* reform process in 1986, which initiated the shift from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy with state management, strengthening of democracy in social life and international economic integration. The results of *doi moi* have been impressive and the economy grew rapidly between the late 1980s and 1997, when the Asian financial crisis struck the economies of the region. The principles of *doi moi* still guide national priorities and development goals. In this context, the Government has stressed the importance of four key components of Viet Nam's development strategy: (a) high and sustainable economic growth; (b) political, social and economic stability; (c) equity; and (d) people-centred development. A five-year plan for socio-economic development (2001-2005) and a ten-year socio-economic development strategy (2001-2010) are currently in preparation. Since the outbreak of the financial crisis, the Government has emphasized the importance of equity in the development process and the priority for rural development and poverty reduction.

B. Current problems and challenges

2. The following analysis is drawn largely from the common country assessment (CCA) and "Attacking Poverty", a joint report prepared by the Government, donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in 1999. Three important elements provide the underlying framework: creating opportunities, ensuring equity and reducing vulnerability. These themes represent key interlinked imperatives in the development process and in the fight against poverty.

Poverty

3. The Government has put rural development and poverty reduction at the forefront of its development agenda. In 1996, the Government set the targets of reducing poverty from 20 per cent in 1996 to 10 per cent in 2000 and eliminating it by 2010 and of eradicating hunger by 2000. To tackle poverty, the Government has set up national target programmes and increased substantially its expenditure for poverty elimination. Since the launching of *doi moi*, Viet Nam has experienced impressive reductions in poverty and the improvement of many social indicators. Based on the poverty line as established by the World Bank, the level of poverty in Viet Nam fell from approximately 70 per cent in the mid-1980s to 58 per cent in 1993 and to an estimated range of 30-45 per cent in 1998. Despite these achievements, Viet Nam remains a poor country with a low average income per capita ranking (estimated at $375 in 1999). The recent decline in poverty must be taken with caution. Many households have risen barely above the poverty line and therefore remain vulnerable and might easily fall back into poverty.

4. In Viet Nam, poverty is mostly a rural phenomenon. In 1998, 90 per cent of the poor lived in rural areas, while between 1993 and 1998 rural-urban disparities increased. Disparities also express themselves in the large differences in the incidence of poverty between regions and between ethnic groups. Gender imbalances exist as well, within households, and with regard to land and credit access, workload and political representation. Isolation and remoteness, poor infrastructure and communication, and limited access to productive resources are some of the main problems affecting the poorest rural regions. Vulnerability to natural disasters is another major factor of poverty in regions prone to floods or droughts. Poverty is growing in urban areas. The urban poor are particularly hit by rising unemployment levels, often living in very precarious conditions. The urban economy being a cash economy makes the urban poor particularly vulnerable, as they cannot survive on subsistence strategies. Urban migrants, with temporary registration, find difficulties in accessing housing, health and education services and in applying for jobs.

Governance and reforms

5. The *doi moi* reform process advocated policies based mostly on improving governance. Many challenges, however, remain with regard to creating an enabling environment for sustainable development and poverty reduction, which benefit both men and women. The importance of an adequate legal, institutional and

economic environment has become increasingly obvious since the slowdown of the economy in 1997.

6. The legal framework needs to be improved to support a market-oriented economy. In this context, enhanced clarity, information and equity are key issues. The importance of public administration reform became clear through a resolution at the Seventh Party Polonium. It is fundamental for accelerating development and needs to be improved with the aim to: (a) clarify the role of the State and the appropriate allocation of public-sector functions among central and local Governments in order to ensure a right balance of accountability; (b) improve the delivery of public services; and (c) foster transparency of state institutions. It is also necessary to decentralize the decision-making authority further to local levels, to strengthen the sense of responsibility and to enhance the capacity of local staff. Voluntary participation of civil society at all levels should be enhanced. The increase in transparency and accountability of local Governments through the dissemination of information about their activities and financial situation is an important issue in this participation process.

7. The efficient performance of all sectors of the economy is necessary for continued growth. However, it requires taking legal, administrative and technical measures to improve the competitiveness of the economy and the business environment. Of particular importance is encouraging the development and increased participation of all economic sectors, including the private sector. To attract external sources of financing, however, a more favourable and attractive investment environment is needed.

Environment and natural resource management

8. During the 1990s, the Government took a number of important legal and institutional steps to protect the environment. Yet, with all these efforts, the natural environment continues to deteriorate. Current patterns of natural-resource exploitation are not sustainable and threaten the economic and environmental health of the country. Poverty is closely linked to environment. Poor households, among them ethnic minorities, suffer disproportionately from the degradation of natural resources because they are highly dependent on these resources for their living. With a growing population, the overuse of land and the destruction of forest cover lead to soil erosion and biodiversity loss. Marine and water resources are being harmed by population growth, urbanization and industrialization. Fisheries are being damaged by inappropriate fishing methods, while coastal habitats are degraded by poorly managed aquaculture practices. In major cities, water and air pollution is becoming critical.

9. *Viet Nam is one of the most disaster-prone* countries in the world and suffers from regular typhoons, floods and droughts. Disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation are therefore important issues. The country's capacity to protect itself in the likely event of a disaster should be developed to ensure better disaster management, which will help reduce the vulnerability of the people.

II. Results and lessons of past cooperation

10. The first CCF (1997-2000) focused on: (a) poverty elimination and social policies; (b) reform and development management; (c) environment and natural resource management; and (d) some service areas. The 1999 country review revealed that the Government saw UNDP cooperation as a catalyst for national socio-economic development. It confirmed the continued relevance of the broad thematic areas, while calling for greater focus and a stronger shift towards governance-related issues to optimize impact and build on results achieved.

Poverty elimination and social policies

11. UNDP cooperation focused on raising people's awareness of how they can influence their own development planning and raise a sense of self-reliance by introducing new technologies and participatory approaches. People however, were often lacking in project-management capacities and unfamiliar with new approaches. While it is important to continue such cooperation it is just as important to learn from experience and thus *institutionalize successful* approaches, in particular those which promote an enabling environment for decentralized decision-making and local participation.

Reform and development management

12. Sets of projects were used that were conceptually interlinked in a programme approach. UNDP contributed to economic and legal-reform efforts, while its PAR projects helped to streamline administrative

procedures and improve the delivery of public services. However, in the absence of a national PAR strategy, it was unclear how much UNDP contributed to reaching national PAR goals. UNDP should therefore help to develop a comprehensive PAR strategy that would serve as a basis in the design of UNDP interventions and in dealing with issues such as decentralization, accountability and transparency.

Environment and natural resource management

13. UNDP played an important role in raising environmental awareness with decision-makers, and society in general, and helped to forge a closer link between environmental considerations and investment planning. UNDP also made an effective contribution to improving national capacities for disaster preparedness and mitigation. Considering its limited resources, however, UNDP cooperation seemed relatively dispersed and needs more focus.

Gender mainstreaming

14. Progress was made in programming activities in general and, in particular, in poverty alleviation projects, as well as in capacity development for the National Committee for the Advancement of Women. While the country office introduced a gender mainstreaming strategy for the year 2000, more still remained to be done to move from awareness raising to practical implementation. In addition, gender issues should be fully integrated into the next CCF.

15. In service areas, UNDP effected high quality policy research and brought practical benefits to the Government. UNDP should continue this activity in PAR, grass-roots democracy, sustainable financing of development, capacity development and in the national human development report, anchored strongly in academic institutions. Aid coordination was successful as exemplified by (a) the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the common country assessment (CCA); (b) supporting follow-up efforts to the United Nations global conferences; (c) backing monthly donor group forums chaired by UNDP, as well as sectoral aid coordination conferences and consultative group meetings organized together with the World Bank; and (d) promoting thematic and geographical development partnerships. As an honest broker between the Government and the donor community, UNDP should continue strengthening its role in streamlining official development assistance (ODA) coordination mechanisms.

16. The quality of new project designs has improved and the lead time for project preparation has been reduced as a result of increased participation and better interaction between the various parties. Project design, however, should improve the linkage between inputs and results, process and substance, and should be based on a careful assessment of counterpart capacities.

17. Considerable efforts were made to strengthen national capacities for the effective implementation of national execution strategies. Whereas national execution has fostered a greater sense of national ownership and a reasonable degree of decentralized management responsibilities, accountability and sustainability remain concerns that should be addressed.

III. Objectives, programme areas and expected results

18. As part of the overarching objective of poverty alleviation, UNDP will focus on creating an environment of good governance for poverty alleviation, drawing upon the lessons described in chapter II and the recommendations of the CCA and the joint "Attacking poverty" report. Governance is defined as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. UNDAF identifies areas of programmatic focus in line with analysis set out in the "Attacking poverty" and the CCA. Based on these documents, UNDP will focus its efforts on governance, rural development and environment. The following programme areas have been derived from the CCA recommendations and validated through extensive consultations. As a result, they have been structured around three thematic areas: (a) reform management, (b) sustainable livelihoods; and (c) environmental management. Gender equality and grass-roots democracy have been integrated as cross-cutting issues.

19. Following the lessons learned from the ongoing programme period and responding to recent developments, five guiding principles for programming have been identified:

(a) *Partnerships for development.* The need for improved quality of ODA underlines the need for

closer partnerships between the Government and the donor community. UNDP will, therefore, increasingly support national programmes within strategic partnerships to enhance aid coordination, linkages and synergies between government agencies and key donors;

(b) *Flexibility to address emerging national priorities*. Although the development agenda of Viet Nam is not expected to change drastically, the CCF will need to be flexible enough to meet possible priorities emerging from the forthcoming ten-year development strategy;

(c) *Moving to upstream policy support*. Focusing on institutionalizing lessons learned from projects in policy frameworks and implementation mechanisms, and ensuring that the right policy frameworks are in place as preconditions for institutional capacity-building will be key features of the new CCF. The difference between the first CCF and second CCF, therefore, will not so much be in the programme areas, but more in the way UNDP will work, continuing the trend towards policy-driven support and capacity development;

(d) *Results Orientation*. Following the recognized need to increase the ability of UNDP to plan, achieve, capture and demonstrate results, the programme will require greater focus with clearly defined results. Enhancing the focus of UNDP work will contribute to the improvement of the quality and visibility of the interventions and policy advice offered;

(e) *Service areas*. Within the CCF framework, UNDP provides a number of services via both projects and the country office, including research and policy support aid coordination, advocacy, and capacity development. The mix of these services will vary, but in each case they will contribute to improving the general environment for the programmes and increase their quality and relevance.

20. The following sections describe the national objectives that UNDP cooperation will support and the areas whose national results will receive such cooperation, in partnership with the Government and relevant development partners. In each case, the starting point will be cooperation in the development and implementation of national, sectoral and thematic strategies, in particular the ten-year socio-economic development strategy, the comprehensive poverty reduction strategy, the national gender strategy, the PAR strategy, and the national environmental strategy.

A. Reform management

21. To support government efforts to create an enabling environment for sustainable, equitable and people-centred socio-economic development, UNDP intervention will concentrate on the following five programme areas and their expected results.

Promoting the regional and global integration process by maximizing benefits and minimizing risks, in particular for more vulnerable groups in society

22. The expected results in this programme areas are:

(a) A Clear and coherent integration policy that covers strategies for trade liberalization, export development and promotion, while ensuring protection of vulnerable groups in society;

(b) An improved legal framework to fulfil international obligations, promote trade and protect legitimate domestic interests from the impact of integration;

(c) Enhanced public awareness towards integration through public information and promotion of Government-business dialogue.

Promoting an improved framework for the sustainable financing of development

23. The expected results in this programme areas are:

(a) A sustainable strategy to finance Viet Nam's development;

(b) A strengthened institutional framework to manage external debt along with increased capacity to formulate and implement debt strategies;

(c) A strengthened institutional framework for coordinating external financing, notably ODA, with domestic resources;

(d) Improved public investment, planning and budgeting procedures to ensure equitable, effective, transparent and sustainable allocation and use of development resources mobilized externally and domestically, including provisions to sustain recurrent costs.

Further defining and facilitating of the respective roles of the State and the non-state sectors in a market-oriented economy under state management

24. The expected results in this programme area are:

(a) Clearer definitions of the complementary roles of the State and non-state sectors, including the domestic private sector, for sustainable and equitable socio-economic development;

(b) Improved enabling environment, allowing each to play its respective role, shifting many of the implementing duties to non-state sectors, including the private sector, while strengthening the steering, policy-making and monitoring role and capacity of the State;

(c) Increased awareness and understanding of grass-roots democracy (decentralization and participation) and the respective roles of the different actors in local-level development planning.

Strengthening the implementation mechanisms for and compliance with the rule of law, ensuring justice for all

25. The expected results in this programme area are:

(a) An improved legal and institutional framework to reinforce the independence and quality of the judiciary at both central and local levels;

(b) Strengthened implementation of the law to ensure its quicker and consistent application including the introduction and/or enhancement of conciliation, mediation and arbitration mechanisms, including those for women if/where necessary;

(c) Enhanced and diversified legal information-dissemination structures, established using information and communication technologies.

Promoting efficient, cost-effective and equal access to public services

26. The expected results in this programme area are:

(a) Enhanced quality of government-provided public services, in terms of responsiveness, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness and equitable accessibility;

(b) The establishment of a sound institutional framework that clearly defines the effective decentralization of functional, fiscal and decision-making power and provides appropriate mechanisms and means for local governments to fulfil their roles in development planning and delivery of services;

(c) The promotion of alternative public-service delivery systems, using modern information and communication technology, with the aim of ensuring the most efficient and cost-effective services both for the people and for the administration.

B. Sustainable livelihoods

27. To support the Government in its aim to eradicate extreme poverty and to substantially reduce rural and urban poverty, UNDP will concentrate on three programme areas. HIV/AIDS will be addressed as a cross-cutting issue, mainly through awareness raising and advocacy tools.

Promoting gender-sensitive, environmentally sound macroeconomic and sectoral policies, which are beneficial to rural and urban poor, and fostering the formulation and implementation of these policies in a participatory way

28. The expected results in this programme area are:

(a) Increased spending of donors and the Government on basic social services to reduce vulnerability, following the 20:20 initiative and the revision and adaptation of current formal social safety nets;

(b) The adoption and implementation of agricultural policies (reforms) on land, pricing, taxes, exports and economic integration, among others, with special attention given to sustainability issues and greater focus on the poor and vulnerable groups, particularly ethnic minorities;

(c) Increased employment opportunities by providing poor women and men with better access to formal-credit systems (based on market interest rates) and improved technical and market know-how;

(d) Enhanced gender-sensitive capacity to measure and assess poverty locally and nationally, by developing poverty assessment techniques (surveys, research, information technologies) and improving existing poverty measures (poverty lines);

(e) Strengthened capacity of civil-society organizations, in particular those representing women, ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups, to participate better in the country's development process, especially in policy debates with the State.

Supporting the development and sound implementation of gender-sensitive national target programmes (NTPs) in the area of anti-poverty (e.g., poor communes programme, hunger eradication and poverty reduction programme (HEPR)) and in the sustainable management of land and forest (e.g., 5 million hectares programme)

29. The expected results in this programme area are:

(a) Enhanced capacity at the central level in the design and management (financial and technical) of national programmes and in setting up a clear structure and adequate coordination mechanisms among the above-mentioned NTPs, as well as between donors and NTPs;

(b) Strengthened capacity at all levels to ensure that NTPs will be community-based and part of community-development plans;

(c) Gender-sensitive participatory approaches, which have been successfully piloted, institutionalized in NTPs for local-development planning and management processes, to foster equity;

(d) Sound monitoring and evaluation systems and targeting mechanisms set up in each NTP and made operational.

Promoting a sound disaster-management system at local and national levels, paying particular attention to the potential impacts on the poor

30. The expected results in this programme area:

(a) Improved and locally adaptable early warning systems (EWS), as well as preparedness and mitigation systems, to ensure minimum vulnerability. This includes infrastructure programmes designed in such a way that they also fill useful functions for the community in times of disasters;

(b) Strengthened national financial and managerial capacity to develop and regularly update contingency plans and to respond to natural disasters;

(c) Improved coordination among organizations and agencies working in relief assistance, and greater information-sharing on disaster management;

(d) An improved Disaster Relief Fund, regularly replenished and adjusted to arising needs, to ensure adequate assistance to victims of disasters.

C. Environmental management

31. To support the Government in the sustainable management of natural resources, UNDP will concentrate on three programme areas:

Promoting and strengthening an enabling environment for sound environmental management

32. The expected results in this programme area are:

(a) Greater awareness and understanding on the part of decision-makers with regard to sustainable development and environmental protection;

(b) Operationalized processes for integrating environmental aspects into planning and investment procedures by approving sub-law decrees or circulars;

(c) Strengthened governmental capacity to implement environmental legislation and to enforce environmental laws and regulations;

(d) Enhanced environmental awareness in civil society, achievable through the intensified involvement of civil-society groups and the business community in promoting good environmental citizenship and environmental education.

Supporting the development and sound implementation of the national strategy for environmental protection (2001-2010) and the national environmental action plan (2001-2005), applying gender sensitive and participatory principle

33. The expected results of this programme area are:

(a) Enhanced capacity at the central level in the design and management (financial and technical) of national environmental strategies and plans, as well as in the setting up of a clear structure and adequate coordination mechanisms between the Government and the donor community;

(b) Strengthened capacity at the local level to ensure sustainable management and better integration of natural-resource management in local-development planning and investment in a gender-sensitive and participatory manner.

Strengthening environmental activities that enhance and protect the global and regional environment

34. The expected results of this programme area are:

(a) Strengthened institutional and human capacities of selected national focal points for international environmental conventions and agreements by providing resources and expertise to the Government;

(b) Improved information sharing and coordination between national focal points, national institutions, NGOs, UNDP, the World Bank and other partners, as well as between UNDP-funded country projects and regional programmes;

(c) Increased participation of private-sector entities in support of international environmental conventions;

(d) Enhanced support for activities in the environmental action plan which will strengthen participation in international environmental conventions and agreements.

IV. Management arrangements

A. Management of country cooperation framework

35. As guiding principles for all stages of the CCF period, the Government and UNDP will encourage broad-based participation by major stakeholder groups and promote the use of results-based management.

36. Based on the CCF, programme outlines will be developed for programme areas. These will set out the types of interventions that UNDP will support, the outcomes to which it will contribute, the outputs that it will produce, the partnerships that it will try to build, and the major indicators that it will use to measure progress. These outlines will provide a framework for the identification and design of future projects.

37. As an overall principle in project identification, priority will be given to those initiatives which will have an impact on policies and institutions that promote sustainable poverty reduction. The identification exercise will be guided by a set of major criteria: new initiatives should reach a greater number of targeted beneficiaries, pilot new ideas, produce strategic policy advice and promote strategic partnerships.

38. Project design will emphasize results over inputs and be based on better pre-project survey/analysis, including baseline data collection and assessment of counterpart capacities. The Government and UNDP will promote national ownership through the enhanced participation of and improved interaction between the various parties. A preparatory cooperation phase will be used, in particular for line agencies at the sub-national level and/or which have limited management capacities. Performance-management training will be given to UNDP and Government staff to strengthen project-design skills and quality.

39. The Government and UNDP will ensure the accountability and effectiveness of national execution implementation. Specific measures will include: (a) improving training on national execution procedures and project management; (b) fostering national ownership and decentralized project management with regard to transparency in resource management and accountability in results; (c) conducting a comprehensive review of national execution experiences to enhance project performance; and (d) greater timeliness and cost-effectiveness in input mobilization, including better use of the improved capacities of country offices to support implementation.

40. The Government and UNDP will seek technical expertise from United Nations agencies where necessary, through support for policy and programme development (SPPD) and support for technical services (STS) resources, to ensure the technical quality of national execution projects and the accountability of UNDP in the effective use of its resources. The increased use of United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in development activities will be promoted. Use of national expertise will be promoted by improving the legal framework for the national-consulting industry and by strengthening the capacity and professionalism of national consultants. Use of Vietnamese volunteers

will be piloted, in particular young people and new graduates, in support of poverty alleviation efforts.

B. Linkages with inter-country programmes

41. The linkages between inter-country programmes and country projects will be further promoted, geographically focusing on the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Mekong subregion and thematically on cross-border issues. The exchange of experiences and good practices through networking will be an essential element in the pursuit of such inter-country programmes.

C. Monitoring, review and evaluation

42. In undertaking CCF annual reviews, the mid-term country review, and project evaluations, the Government and UNDP will promote consultations with key stakeholders and beneficiary groups to improve the usefulness and relevance of these exercises. Such reviews will be coordinated with those of UNDAF through the mechanism of the United Nations Joint Programme Committee.

43. Monitoring and evaluation practices will apply results-based management principles, with CCF progress judged against the outcomes set out in the strategic results framework. Lessons learned through monitoring, review and evaluation processes and other thematic studies will be systematically compiled and used to improve the design of future projects.

44. Knowledge building will be an important element in ensuring the success of the CCF itself and in helping to transform UNDP into a knowledge-based and policy-advisory organization. To this end, the policy-research capacities of the UNDP office will be strengthened further and substantive papers will be prepared by its staff. The expertise of resident and long-term project consultants will be effectively utilized and presented in the form of issue papers and policy advice in areas related to the CCF.

D. Resource mobilization strategy and targets

45. UNDP core funding will be used as "seed money" for leveraging non-core resources. The Government and UNDP will implement a resource-mobilization strategy in support of national objectives and priorities and will try to broaden the resource base beyond the traditional donors and trust-fund facilities. Furthermore, opportunities will be sought to mobilize contributions from the private sector.

46. The Government will ensure that national in-kind contributions will be made available to finance local inputs as fully as possible. The Government and UNDP will devise an exit strategy which will help achieve this goal and allow the initial provision of government cash contributions, based on an agreement between the Government and UNDP on a case-by-case basis.

47. The Government and UNDP will make efforts and devise concrete measures to increase the ratio of non-core expenditures to about 40 to 45 per cent of total expenditures by the end of this CCF period. The resource-mobilization targets in the attached annex estimate the total resources, both core and non-core, that are expected to be available to support the focus programme areas and other related activities outlined in the CCF document.

Annex

Resource mobilization target table for Viet Nam (2001-2005)

Source	Amount (In thousands of United States dollars)	Comments
UNDP regular resources		
Estimated carry-over into 2001	9 250	Includes AOS.
TRAC 1.1.1	19 304	Assigned immediately to country.
TRAC 1.1.2	0 to 66.7 per cent of TRAC 1.1.1	This range of percentages is presented for initial planning purposes only. The actual assignment will depend on the availability of high-quality programmes. Any increase in the range of percentages would also be subject to availability of resources.
SPPD/STS	1 700	
Subtotal	**30 254**[a]	
UNDP other resources		
Government cost-sharing	250	
Sustainable development funds	16 130	
	of which:	
GEF	15 500	
Capacity 21	350	
Montreal Protocol	280	
Third party cost-sharing	17 000	
Funds, trust funds and other	4 900	
	of which:	
UNCDF	4 400	
Trust funds	500	Japan Trust Fund for Women and Nordic Trust Fund.
Subtotal	**38 280**	
Grand total	**68 534**[a]	

[a] Not inclusive of TRAC 1.1.2, which is allocated regionally for subsequent country application.

Abbreviations: AOS = administrative and operational services; GEF = Global Environment Facility; SPPD = support for policy and programme development; STS = support for technical services; TRAC = target for resource assignment from the core; and UNCDF = United Nations Capital Development Fund.